

CHICAGO  
ARCHITECTURE  
BIENNIAL

**CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE BIENNIAL ANNOUNCES THE APPOINTMENT OF  
YESOMI UMOLU AS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE 2019 EDITION**

**SEPTEMBER 19, 2019–JANUARY 5, 2020**

**PRESS AND PROFESSIONAL PREVIEWS: SEPTEMBER 17–18, 2019**



Yesomi Umolu at the Chicago Cultural Center. Photo by Andrew Bruah, courtesy the Chicago Architecture Biennial.

**CHICAGO (March 6, 2018)** – The Chicago Architecture Biennial (CAB) and Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced today that Chicago-based curator and writer **Yesomi Umolu** will serve as the Artistic Director of the Biennial’s 2019 edition.

With a background in architectural design and curatorial studies, Umolu focuses her work on global contemporary art and spatial practices. Her recent projects—including the exhibitions *Kapwani Kiwanga: The sum and its parts*, *The Land Grant: Forest Law*, and *The Museum of Non Participation: The New Deal*—have explored the politics of the built environment. Umolu currently holds the position of Exhibitions Curator at the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts at the

University of Chicago, and is a visiting lecturer, critic, and speaker at a number of international universities and institutions.

“I am honored to be invited to serve as Artistic Director of the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial,” said Umolu. “Having my roots in the field of architecture, spatial questions have always been an important consideration of my work with contemporary artists, architects, and urbanists from across the world. I am excited to embark on the journey of engaging the city of Chicago and its publics, as well as visitors to Chicago from across the country and around the world, in these conversations.”

Jack Guthman, Chairman of the Biennial, said, “We are delighted that Yesomi Umolu will serve as the Artistic Director of the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial. Her broad curatorial experience makes her ideally suited to build upon the critical acclaim accorded to our 2015 and 2017 Biennials by our dual constituencies—the architecture profession worldwide, as well as Chicagoans and visitors to our city.”

In the coming months, Umolu will formalize and convene an international curatorial team of creative practitioners with strong knowledge of visual arts, architecture, and design practices globally. The members of the curatorial team will be announced this spring. Umolu’s vision for the next Chicago Architecture Biennial features the exploration of emerging practices and global locations that are developing new approaches to architecture, urbanism, and spatial practice. Through this process, she will use the Biennial as a forum to explore creative responses to shifting spatial conditions at local, regional, and international levels.

“Yesomi is a visionary curator with strong roots in Chicago, and she will work tirelessly to cultivate an incredible cultural, educational, and economic event for the city,” said Mayor Emanuel. “With Yesomi at the helm, the third Chicago Architecture Biennial is sure to secure its reputation as the most innovative architectural, art, and design showcase of its kind.”

“We are delighted by Yesomi Umolu’s appointment as the next Artistic Director of the Chicago Architecture Biennial. The appointment further testifies to the curatorial imagination and dexterity she has demonstrated so well at the Logan Center for the Arts. By consistently showcasing the best in architectural innovation—in a city renowned for its architectural achievements—the Biennial advances the conversation about the potential impact of design. That conversation is playing an increasing role at the University of Chicago, and it is vital, of course, to the future of Chicago’s South Side, as to cities around the world,” added Daniel Diermeier, Provost of the University of Chicago.

Umolu was selected by a committee comprised of Chicago Architecture Biennial board members, as well as past Artistic Directors, who considered candidates from around the world and from a variety of disciplines. Sharon Johnston and Mark Lee, 2017 Chicago Architecture Biennial Artistic Directors, said, “Umolu’s curatorial practice, which boldly, yet elegantly, traverses the fields of art and architecture, makes her uniquely situated for success in this role. The Biennial is a complex and multifaceted platform for exploring both the history and present-day challenges in the field, and we eagerly await the outcomes of Umolu’s curatorial inquiry and exploration.”

The Biennial, now in its third edition, will return September 19, 2019, and run through January 5, 2020.

Press and professional previews will take place September 17–18, 2019. Following a successful partnership in 2017, the opening of the 2019 edition will align with EXPO CHICAGO, the International Exposition of Contemporary and Modern Art, and the main site of the Biennial will once again be the Chicago Cultural Center. This edition of the Biennial will be under the leadership of Executive Director Todd Palmer, who also served as Executive Director of the 2017 edition.

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### **About Yesomi Umolu**

Yesomi Umolu is Exhibitions Curator at the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts at the University of Chicago. She directs a program of international contemporary art in the Logan Center Gallery and contributes to a number of strategic committees that drive the development of contemporary art, architecture, and urbanism on campus. In addition to her curatorial role, Umolu holds the position of Lecturer in the Humanities Division. She is a 2016 recipient of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Curatorial Fellowship.

Specializing in global contemporary art and spatial practices, Umolu recently curated *Cinthia Marcelle and Tiago Mata Machado: Divine Violence* (2017), *Kapwani Kiwanga: The sum and its parts* (2017), and *So-called Utopias* (2015–2016) at the Logan Center Gallery. Prior to joining the Logan, she held curatorial positions at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (MSU Broad); the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Manifesta 8, the European Biennial of Contemporary Art. Her notable exhibitions include *Material Effects* (MSU Broad, 2015), *John Akomfrah: Imaginary Possessions* (MSU Broad, 2014), *The Land Grant: Forest Law* (MSU Broad, 2014), and *The Museum of Non Participation: The New Deal* (Walker Art Center, 2013).

Umolu has been a visiting lecturer, critic, and speaker at a number of international universities, including Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan; the Bartlett School of Architecture at University College London; and University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. She serves on the curatorial advisory board for the United States Pavilion at the 16th Venice Architecture Biennale, commissioned by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the University of Chicago.

### **About the Chicago Architecture Biennial**

The Chicago Architecture Biennial's mission is to provide a platform for groundbreaking architectural projects and spatial experiments that demonstrate how creativity and innovation can radically transform our lived experience. Through its constellation of exhibitions, full-scale installations, and programming, the Biennial invites the public to engage with and think about architecture in new and unexpected ways, and to take part in a global discussion on the future of the field.

The Chicago Architecture Biennial made manifest Mayor Rahm Emanuel's vision for a major international architectural event, and was an outcome of the comprehensive cultural plan developed by Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events under the leadership of Michelle T. Boone. The 2015 Chicago Architecture Biennial, entitled *The State of the Art of Architecture*, was curated by Co-Artistic Directors Joseph Grima and Sarah Herda, and showcased the ideas of more than 120 architecture and design firms from around the world. It was the largest international exhibition of contemporary architecture ever to have taken place in North America. The second edition of the Biennial, entitled *Make New History*, opened in September 2017 and was curated by Co-Artistic Directors Sharon Johnston and Mark Lee of the LA-based firm Johnston Marklee. Both editions were presented in partnership with the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, and each was attended by over half a million visitors.

The Chicago Architecture Biennial board is chaired by Jack Guthman, with Ambassador Louis Susman serving as Director Emeritus. Board members include Michelle T. Boone, Robert Clark, Valerie Corr Hanserd, Sarah Herda, Lynn Lockwood Murphy, Robin Loewenberg Tebbe, Kelly Semrau, Mark P. Sexton, and RaMona Westbrook. Leadership staff includes Todd Palmer, Executive Director, and Rachel Kaplan, Deputy Director.

## **Sponsors and Special Partners of the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial**

The 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial will be presented in partnership with the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events and is funded through private donations. Planning and operation of the Biennial during 2018 is made possible through the generous support of the Alphawood Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation.